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SUBJECT: Deputy U/S Levine Meets with Premier Wen Jiabao

Ref: A) Beijing 6973 B) Beijing 7059 C) Beijing 7060

¶1. (U) Summary: Premier Wen Jiabao met with Deputy Undersecretary for Labor Affairs Arnold Levine, Special Representative of Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, and with Labor Ministers attending the China Employment Forum. D/US Levine met with Ministry of Labor and Cooperation Director for International Cooperation Liu Xu, and with Administrator of the State Administration for Work Safety (SAWS) Wang Xianzheng. End Summary.

¶2. D/US for International Labor Affairs Arnold Levine, representing Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, and labor ministers from 26 countries attending the China Employment Forum, met April 29 with China's Premier Wen Jiabao. The Premier opened his remarks by quoting "the first President of the United States" for the proposition that "the impoverished have no freedom." Expanding on that theme, he noted that China has now changed to a development strategy that puts people first. He emphasized the size of the challenge, especially that of finding jobs for the 100 million migrant workers flooding the cities. China must create 10 million jobs per year, he said.

¶3. Earlier the same day, D/US Levine met with Ministry of Labor and Social Security Director General for Bilateral Affairs Liu Xu. D/US Levine reconfirmed the offer made to Vice Minister Bu to broaden and deepen cooperation on labor issues, and noted that he would convey the invitation to visit China to Secretary Chao. DG Xu thanked D/US Levine for informing him, and said he would convey the news immediately to his Minister. He called the decision an important one for the relationship between the two governments, and for the relationship between the two departments. D/US Levine briefly introduced the possibility of funding a China HIV-AIDS in the Workplace program through the ILO in the amount of approximately USD 3 million. He noted that DOL intends to work with the MOLSS as lead agency, and welcomed collaboration with the Ministry of Health as well.

¶4. Also on April 29, D/US Levine met with Administrator of the State Administration for Work Safety (SAWS) Wang Xianzheng, and with Bai Ran, Director, National Center for International Exchange and Cooperation (NCIEC), a non-governmental organization associated with the State Administration for Work Safety. Administrator Wang thanked D/US Levine for the visit two years ago of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety David Lauritsky, and for assistance given to the Ministry in improving its mine

rescue skills through participation in the mine rescue competition. D/US Levine noted that Administrator Wang will travel to the United States in May, and that A/S Lauritsky plans to travel to China in June.

15. The Chinese government has always paid great attention to the safety and health of its workers, and the new government has increased that attention because of its attention to the human aspects of development, the Administrator said. That morning, Wang told Levine, he had attended a meeting chaired by Vice Premier Wu Yi. She told the group that the rapid increase in GDP had also had an impact on work safety, in part because of insufficient management and training. China hopes to learn from the experience of the United States in workplace safety and health. He noted that it will take time for China to develop its workplace health and safety programs and capabilities. The new leadership has begun to shift emphasis from reducing fatalities to improving occupational health, Wang said. To realize fundamental change, China must learn from the experience of other countries, he said. In addition, China must improve the safety awareness of workers, rely on science and technology to improve equipment, and improve the legal system for work safety. Within the last several years, SAWS has engaged in cooperative projects with 20 countries to improve workplace safety and health.

16. D/US Levine told Administrator Wang that Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao had designated him to explore broader, deeper cooperation with China in labor-related areas. He told the Administrator that he hopes to explore with SAWS the possibility of expanded cooperation in the area of occupational safety and health. In a slide presentation NCIEC Director Bai told D/US Levine about cooperation projects with Japan, Germany, and the International Labor Organization.

17. This cable was cleared by the Department of Labor delegation before leaving Beijing.

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